

July 16, 2015 CDC Ebola Response Update

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Stephanie Nguyen] A major part of CDC's role in responding to outbreaks is sending experts to affected areas. CDC has sent staff on more than 2,000 deployments to support the Ebola response in West Africa, the United States, and other countries. We know it can be scary for friends and families of responders when they don't know much about where their loved ones are going, what it will be like, or how safe it will be in another country. George Roark is from CDC's emergency personnel staffing team. He meets and prepares all of our responders before they leave the country, and he's with us today to talk about the safety of responders. Thanks for joining us, George.

[George Roark] I'm glad to be here. We understand that families and friends are worried about safety when their loved ones travel overseas, especially to help with the Ebola response in West Africa. While I can't say that our responders are *completely* risk-free, I can say that we take pride in preparing our folks who volunteered. The primary concerns we brief responders about include traffic accidents, Lassa fever, Malaria, and personal safety. Rest assured, we take safety very seriously and work with our responders to ensure they have plenty of resources and are prepared to support the response.

[Stephanie Nguyen] Tell us more about how you help responders prepare before they leave and about the safety standards in place for them while in-country.

[George Roark] Before leaving, every responder participates in security and safety meetings, along with an in-depth training. The U.S. Embassy approves all responder hotels and housing arrangements, and we also provide each responder with multiple phones and sometimes a personal tracking locator. Once responders arrive in country, we have U.S. government vehicles and drivers for all their travel and if they need to travel outside the Embassy or another secure location, they must travel in pairs. We want our responders to feel secure and confident both before they travel and while they are in-country.

[Stephanie Nguyen] What kind of equipment do responders get?

[George Roark] We want to make sure that every responder has the ability to communicate; that's the number one thing. And we do that by making sure that they have Blackberries, you know, we have unlocked cell phones, they have laptops that are deployment laptops, and we also give them satellite phones, and on some rare occasions, we give them a personal tracking locator. A personal tracking locator allows them to send a distress signal if they were in a place where they needed to get in contact very urgently. In addition to that, we provide them sleeping bags, mosquito nets, water filtration supplies, and on some occasions, we actually provide food and water for them to take with them when they go up to the field. In all cases, they are well prepared. Our mission is to make sure that every CDC responder feels safe traveling overseas, and by doing this, we make sure that they can do their mission without fears.

[Stephanie Nguyen] Thanks so much for your time today, George. To learn more about CDC responders supporting the Ebola response, visit cdc.gov/ebola.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.